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## THESIS

STUDY OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN  
CRISES OF CZECHOSLOVAK HISTORY

by

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March 2005

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STUDY OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN CRISES OF CZECHOSLOVAK  
HISTORY

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines civil-military relations during the critical moments of the Czechoslovak history, particularly during the deep political and societal crises in 1938, 1948, 1968, and 1989. Such a method offers an opportunity to analyze civilian control of the military under a situation when the civil-military relations are in deep crisis. By concluding that even under such conditions there were stable civil-military relations in former Czechoslovakia, this thesis affirms the theory of military professionalism as a crucial factor in civil-military relations, as presented by Samuel P. Huntington. Thus, the study of civil-military relations in crises of the Czechoslovak history provides an exceptional opportunity to test the Huntington's model of the equilibrium of objective civilian control in the circumstances of profound societal disturbances. In accordance with the Huntington's theory of stable civil-military relations, this thesis attests that a strong military professionalism, typified by the bonds of traditions, obedience, and patriotic loyalty, plays crucial role in determining stability of civil-military relations, i.e. an objective civilian control of the military. Subsequently, by following this reasoning this thesis also justifies assumption of permanently stable civil-military relations in Czechia, because it intentionally concentrates only on the continuum of the Czechoslovak and the Czech civil-military relations.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This thesis examines civil-military relations during the critical moments of the Czechoslovak history, particularly during the deep political and societal crises in 1938, 1948, 1968, and 1989. The presented study focuses on these events because they provide a unique opportunity to study civilian control of the military under circumstances when the civil-military relations in a relatively compact society are highly strung, if not on the edge of collapse. By concluding that even under such conditions there were always stable civil-military relations in former Czechoslovakia, the study affirms the theory of military professionalism as a crucial factor in civil-military relations, as presented by Samuel P. Huntington.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, by following this reasoning the thesis also justifies assumption of permanently stable civil-military relations in Czechia.

In order to narrow down the topic this thesis examines the problems of Czechoslovak civil-military relations only from the Czech point of view, as the Czechs were the dominant nation in Czechoslovakia from its origin in 1918 until the Czech-Slovak dissociation resulting in the peaceful split of Czechoslovakia into two successor states, Czechia and Slovakia, on January 1, 1993.<sup>2</sup> Also, the Czechs have fully identified themselves with the Czechoslovak heritage and the Czech military fully embraces the traditions of the Czechoslovak military professionalism; hence, the continuity in civil-military relations has never been disrupted.<sup>3</sup>

The situation seems to be more complicated in Slovakia, as the Slovaks generally resisted their somewhat subordinated status in the bi-national Czechoslovakia. The different attitudes of both nations seem to originate in long-separate historical experiences from times when both nations were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. While “by accident of geographic location, the Czech lands fell to the more economically

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: the Theory of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, renewed edition, 1985), 7-18.

<sup>2</sup> William R. Keylor, *The Twentieth Century World*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 477.

<sup>3</sup> This is the reason that the terms Czechoslovak and Czech are used interchangeably for the purpose of this thesis.

developed and nationally tolerant Austrian part of the dual monarchy....Slovaks were increasingly subject to the pressures of a government *magyarization* {Hungarization) policy,”<sup>4</sup> which put limitation on nation’s development. Such a historic experience may provide historic explanation for “the higher degree of emotionality or over-sensitivity of the Slovak national character.”<sup>5</sup> Another complicating factor is the civil-military heritage of the first independent Slovak state during World War II and particularly the Slovak National Uprising in 1944. According to Jelínek, the uprising saved the element of nationalism, which otherwise would have been discredited by the Slovak alliance with Nazi Germany.<sup>6</sup>

The different character of the Slovak civil-military relations seems to be documented by the fact that Slovakia’s defense reform was “hampered by political instability and fragmentation,”<sup>7</sup> during the first years after gaining independence in 1993. Although in recent years Slovaks have managed “to build and maintain stability in the ASR [Slovak Armed forces],”<sup>8</sup> which undoubtedly contributed to the Slovak accession to NATO in 2004, it is evident that the Slovak military professionalism comes from different roots. For this reason, this thesis intentionally concentrates only on the continuum of the Czechoslovak and the Czech civil-military relations.

## B. IMPORTANCE

This thesis is important for two basic reasons. First of all, the history of the Czechoslovak civil-military relations provides an excellent opportunity to test the Huntington’s model of the equilibrium of objective civilian control<sup>9</sup> in reality, under the conditions of deep societal disturbances of different origins and character. The thesis’ main idea is based on the general understanding that “there are few more critical factors

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<sup>4</sup> Carol Skalknik Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation Versus State* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1998), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Jiří Musil ed., *The End of Czechoslovakia* (Budapest: Central European University Press), 139.

<sup>6</sup> Yeshayahu A. Jelinek, *The Lust for Power: Nationalism, Slovakia, and the Communists 1918-1948* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1983), 75.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Simon, *NATO and the Czech & Slovak Republics: a Comparative Study in Civil-Military Relations* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2004), 238.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>9</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 94.



in the stability of civilian government than the relationship between the professional military and the society it serves. Paradoxically, an efficient and cohesive military is at once a guarantor of regime security and a potential threat to civilian rule.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, the study of the civil-military relations in crises of Czechoslovak history provides an exceptional testing environment, because “the most important causes of military intervention in politics are not military but political and reflect not the social and organizational characteristics of the military establishment but the political and institutional structure of the society.”<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the mentioned crises are quite different in their nature and they are separated in time by a decade or two; hence, this phenomenon provides natural conditions that are similar to a controlled experiment, because in such a situation it is possible to test the changes in civil-military relations on the background of radical and often turbulent societal developments.

Secondly, owing to the fact that this thesis is intentionally limited to a single nation and the developmental continuity of the Czechoslovak and the Czech society in the span of 50 years, it also allows to evaluate and estimate the further developments of the Czech civil-military relations. This effect originates from the fact that, culturally, the Czechoslovak heritage is a key determinant of the Czech civil-military relations. Secondly, the institutional memory of military organizations tends to be long and conservative, as “conservatism is basically similar to the military ethic.... [because conservatism] is not driven by its own logic to an inevitable conflict with the military values which stem from the demands of the military function.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the historical evidence of a military professionalism and a firm civilian control of the military is also important for the present and future civil-military relations in Czechia.

## C. METHODOLOGY

In order to find a credible explanation for the absence of any involvement of the military in the modern Czechoslovak politics, this thesis employs a single case study,

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<sup>10</sup> Condoleezza Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army, 1948-1983: Uncertain Allegiance* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), xi.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 194.

<sup>12</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 93.

where the constant output of the Czechoslovak civil-military relations is tested against dramatically changing societal environment in the span of more than seven decades. Internal and external threats should be considered as important condition determining factors, as they form extreme cases of security challenges, which consequently test the relationship between the society and its military force as the military has strong incentives to step into politics. Because this thesis only aspires to come up with a specific explanation in the frame of the general theory of the military professionalism as a crucial factor in civil-military relations, the inherent weakness of a single case study, i.e. the fact that “the data is unrandomized and partial correlations are infeasible, since the data points are too few,”<sup>13</sup> is irrelevant for this “within-case” study.

Bibliographically, this thesis is based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are basically composed of historical sources, describing in detail the reaction of the Czechoslovak military in the critical moments of the Czechoslovak (Czech) history, thus providing evidence of the civilian control in the most strenuous moments of civil-military relations. The secondary resources include works providing theoretical background and a broader explanation for the historically proved phenomenon of strong civilian control of the military in Czechoslovakia (Czechia).

#### D. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This thesis is organized in the following way. Chapter II explains the basic theories of civil-military relations, which are needed in order to interpret the output of the Czechoslovak civil-military relations in the studied crises. This *modus operandi* begins with the theory of military professionalism, as a principal theory explaining why a highly professional officer corps stays loyal to its civilian leadership even in a situation when civil-military relations are most vulnerable. Consequently, this theory is applied on the Czechoslovak case, as it explains the historical roots of the Czechoslovak military professionalism. Chapter II then reveals the importance of the threat environment, because under a specific threat situation an internal societal stability may rapidly deteriorate so the possibility of a military coup d'état becomes imminent, as the military

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 51.

officers usually feel it is their patriotic duty to save the nation from the looming chaos. Finally, Chapter II also depicts the two-dimensional theory of party-military relations. This theory is crucial for understanding how civil-military relations are altered under the conditions of a one-party totalitarianism, which applies for the period of the Czechoslovak communist regime, i.e. the crises in 1968 and 1989.

Chapter III analyzes in detail the 1938, 1948, 1968, and 1989 crises, using them as testing moments of the Czechoslovak civil-military relations. It compares the similarities and differences among these crises with special regard to the levels of internal and external security threats. Although each of these crises was caused by different historic and threat factors, the result was always a deep societal crisis, different in its origins but in all cases threatening the basic survival of a society. Chapter III then examines the reaction of the Czechoslovak military leaders in the most perilous moments of the crises' developments, which in fact equaled to the window of opportunity for a military coup. In this process, there have been found certain preparations for a military intervention into politics, but these were ill-prepared and more like a desperate attempts. Generally, the Czechoslovak military leadership has always bowed to its political representation, however serious consequences this approach had for the society as well as the military itself.

Chapter IV concludes that the compliance of the Czechoslovak military with the decisions of civilian authorities, even in the most critical moments of the Czechoslovak history, provides solid evidence of the firm civilian control of the Czechoslovak military under all circumstances. This fact has dual effect; first of all, the study's findings affirm the validity of military professionalism as a crucial factor in civil-military relations. Secondly, these findings also give reasons to assume permanently stable civil-military relations in Czechia, a successor state to former Czechoslovakia.

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## II. THEORETHICAL FOUNDATIONS

### A. MILITARY PROFESSIONALISM AS A CRUCIAL FACTOR

The first theoretical point of departure for the study of the Czechoslovak civil-military relation is represented by the theory of military professionalism, as put forward by Samuel P. Huntington. Huntington believes that the relationship between the society and its military is principally determined by an antagonistic interaction of the societal and functional imperatives. This interaction configures the military professional culture and therefore, it also determines the military loyalty to its civilian leadership. From this point of view it is impossible to reach stable civil-military relations without balancing successfully the functional element, i.e. security guarantees, with the societal one, i.e. ideological and societal powers.

As he further elaborates on this theory, Huntington comes to his conclusion that “the principal focus of civil-military relations is the relation of the officer corps to the state. [because] Here the conflict between functional and societal pressures comes to a head.”<sup>14</sup> This reasoning highlights the officer corps as the vital decision-making element within military structures; hence, it also explains why the professional military culture corresponds with the independent variable of this thesis, primarily determining the output of the Czechoslovak civil-military relations.

This way of thinking brings Huntington to the focal point of his theory, which may be described as a cause and effect relationship that works according the following line: “autonomy [of soldier as experts in the management of violence] leads to professionalization, which leads to political neutrality and voluntary subordination, which leads to secure civilian control. The heart his concept is the putative link between professionalism and voluntary subordination.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, under the conditions of a constant threat environment, a professional military officer corps voluntarily complies with the political guidance, because it is required by the principles of their professional culture. If military authorities do not obey civilian leaders, then they are virtually

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<sup>14</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 18.

contravening their professional ethics by getting involved into politics and thus, they are also losing the professional credit for their autonomous management of violence.

The origins of the Czechoslovak (Czech) military professionalism can be tracked to the years of World War I, which directly preceded to the establishment of the modern Czechoslovak state in 1918. By then the Czechs and Slovaks were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire for almost four centuries. During this period both nations managed to keep distinctive national character, but they were also showing general acceptance for Austro-Hungarian rule, because the monarchy provided them with relatively stable political and economic environment. This explains relatively high number of Czech and Slovak officers in the Habsburg military, which was basically proportionate to the Czech and Slovak share on the overall general population. One reason for such a development was that “throughout its history, the Habsburg army was publicly and actively opposed to any manifestation of nationalism. It recruited its officers from all the provinces of the monarchy....[and] Officers born in German-Austria were not grossly overrepresented.”<sup>16</sup> Secondly, during the last decades of the empire both nations, but especially the Czech lands, were experiencing a prolonged period of political and economic stability, as “the Habsburg monarchy had never known such a long period of peace as that between 1867 and 1914.”<sup>17</sup>

However, the fact that Czech and Slovak soldiers never fully identified themselves with the multinational monarchy dominated by the Austrians and the Hungarians became clear during the later stages of World War I. The war fully exposed that “the Dual Monarchy could not reform itself sufficiently to blunt the [principal] challenge,”<sup>18</sup> i.e. the lack of an adequate political representation for all nationalities within the Austro-Hungarian multinational concept. 1917 and 1918 Hence, the military performance of the Czechoslovak troops on the side of Central powers became significantly poor in 1917 and 1918, “when the monarchy’s population was suffering from hunger, the war economy was in decline, and desertions and revolutionary

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<sup>16</sup> István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 183-4.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>18</sup> Hew Strachan, ed. *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 24.

nationalist and socialist agitation was rampant.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, “it must have been frustration and exasperation that drove entire battalions of Czechs...to surrender....In fact, the dissolution of the monarchy into hostile national entities had begun in the POW camps.”<sup>20</sup> Those who stayed in the Austro-Hungarian military were frequently using acts of passive resistance similar to the way in which the hero “ably depicted by J. Hašek in ‘Good Soldier Švejk,’ often pursued his skirmishing with monarchist, mostly German-speaking army.”<sup>21</sup>

Undoubtedly, the key factor in the development of the Czechoslovak military professionalism was the establishment of the Czechoslovak legions in France, Italy and Russia in the final stage of the Great War. This voluntary force, created from volunteers among the Czech and Slovak émigrés, prisoners of war, and defectors from the Austro-Hungarian military, was extremely important, because as a first national military force after four centuries it literally set up the hierarchy of military values, as the frame for the new Czechoslovak (Czech) military ethics. This way, the legions has laid base for the Czechoslovak (Czech) military professionalism. In its final impact on civil-military relations, this process seems to be similar to the Huntington’s explanation of the Prussian military traditions as a key element of the institutional professionalism in the German military.<sup>22</sup>

Although all Czechoslovak legions were distinguishable by high morale and strong discipline, the military performance of the legions in France and Italy was largely symbolic, as these units were relatively small so they could not reach any decisive military break-through. Though, the situation was completely different in the east, where, after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the Czechoslovak legions for some time represented the most viable military force, as described by Korbel:

The Czechoslovak legion, whose numbers varied according to changing circumstances from 40,000 to 70,000 men, was the only organized, seasoned force in the chaos of revolutionary Russia....the separate peace

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<sup>19</sup> Deák, 192.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 197-8.

<sup>21</sup> Anton A. Bebler, ed., *Civil-Military Relations in Post Communist States: Central and Eastern Europe in Transition* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 1997), 93.

<sup>22</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 99-100.

negotiated at Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 frustrated the Legionaries' plans to fight the Germans on the Eastern front. Expecting to join the French Army on the Western front, they embarked on an apparently fantastic action; the transport of units from the Ukraine, across Siberia, to Vladivostok, from which they would cross the Pacific Ocean, the continental United States, and the Atlantic Ocean to reach France. Only a small group of legionaries made the journey. Most of them, however, were fighting against Bolsheviks in the Russian civil war, an action which made them famous and popular in all Allied capitals. They returned to their homeland eighteen months after the armistice ending World War I was signed at Compiègne.<sup>23</sup>

Hence, it is not surprising that after the independent Czechoslovakia was created in 1918 the core of the Czechoslovak military was being formed from legionaries. By the same token, their moral principles and values became key principles regulating the relations between a political representation and a professional officer corps.

Important feature of the Czechoslovak military professionalism has been its civic character, which seems to be different to similar German traditions. Indeed, Germans and Czechoslovaks were probably the only nations in Central and Eastern Europe that managed to go through extremely turbulent periods of its modern history without resorting to some form of a military coup. According to Huntington, the German professionalism to a certain extent reflects the Junker ideals, which are "highly conservative and sympathetic to military viewpoint."<sup>24</sup> Karl Demeter notes that the German officer corps is distinguishable by their professional or social standing.<sup>25</sup> Although the German officer corps has gone through many sweeping changes, the fact that "it possessed a solid core, compounded of conviction and tradition"<sup>26</sup> has always mattered, which explains why Huntington asserts that even during the most dramatic moments of the German history, German officers "were not trying to act as political figures; they were escaping from politics....They were trying to behave like professional

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<sup>23</sup> Josef Korbel, *Twentieth Century Czechoslovakia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 32.

<sup>24</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 103.

<sup>25</sup> Karl Demeter, *The German Officer Corps in Society and State 1650-1945*, trans. Angus Malcolm (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson Ltd., 1965), 3.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.



soldiers.”<sup>27</sup> The dark side of such an approach was that under the Nazi rule, “they could not destroy the evil in the environment without violating that creed and destroying the good in themselves. Their glory and their tragedy was that they adhered to their faith until obliterated by the holocaust.”<sup>28</sup> For similar reasons, “the coup rate of 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1944 gave the world the first glimpse of moral and political dilemma [of German officers],”<sup>29</sup> because the high professional standards of German military, securing the military’s loyalty to the “civilian” Nazi rulers, were in reality contributing to the destruction of the German nation.

In contrast with the German model, the Czechoslovak (Czech) professionalism does not embrace ideals of a particular societal group. Instead, it traditionally emphasizes superiority of education and learning as a necessary attribute of achieving the status of a military professional as a citizen in uniform. This fact may be documented by the observation of Bruce Lockhart, a British diplomat stationed in Moscow in the period after the Bolshevik revolution. As he commented on the Czechoslovak legionaries, he “admired their stupendous performance and extolled their magnificent spirit and wonderful discipline. He attributed their excellence to their high level of education and observed that the Legion was composed of ‘men of intellectual class’.”<sup>30</sup> The legionaries were perceived in the society as “the men who did their most difficult duty during the most difficult times,”<sup>31</sup> because they fought for their country in World War I even if they did not know whether they would have any country after the war. Had Austro-Hungary survived the war as a state, which could not be fully excluded in the course of war, the legionaries would have been labeled as “traitors.” This explains why the newly established Czechoslovak military fully embraced the moral values and spiritual heritage of the legions.

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<sup>27</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 122.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Demeter, vii.

<sup>30</sup> John O. Crane and Sylvia Crane. *Czechoslovakia: Anvil of the Cold War, with a foreword by Corliss Lamont*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), 35.

<sup>31</sup> Eduard Beneš. *Armáda, brannost národa a obrana státu* (Military, National Security and Defense) (Prague: Svaz Čs. důstojnictva, 1937), 64.

Consequently, legionary ethos determined the role of the professional military in the society, as formulated by President Eduard Beneš in his speech to the graduates of the Czechoslovak Military War College on June 22, 1936: “For an officer of your category, it is necessary to have high military culture...by combining the talent of a soldier-expert with the separate gift of a high spirit and general culture....A military officer must also understand all aspects of our political and public life.”<sup>32</sup> The civic concept was so deeply rooted in the military professional culture that although during the era of Marxist totalitarianism the Czechoslovak communists tried hard to eradicate this concept and replace it with a Marxist military ideology; they never fully succeeded in their effort to suppress the civic elements in the Czechoslovak military culture.

The civic nature of the Czechoslovak military professionalism provides explanation for the remarkable acceptance of supremacy of civilian authorities among the Czechoslovak officers. Generally, civil-military relations tend to be tense in time of societal crises and disorders, because military professionals feel obliged to save their country even if it goes against the authority of civilian political leaders. In the crises of Czechoslovak history, the military, with the exception of isolated incidents described in chapter III, showed complete compliance with the decisions of the civilian leadership. This had to be especially difficult in the 1938 and 1968 crises, because “political decisions resulting in the loss of state sovereignty were erroneously ascribed by the Czech public to the failures of the military. The political tradition of giving up without a fight has been used by many as the ultimate proof of the Czech military’s utter uselessness,”<sup>33</sup> However, by the same token the military’s compliance with civilian guidelines, even at the expense of the moral military prestige, proves the high degree of the Czechoslovak military professionalism. Even under the communist regime, after the democratic civil-military relations were replaced by the communist party – military relations, “the Czechoslovak military leadership always dutifully followed ...consigns

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<sup>32</sup> Beneš. *Armáda, brannost národa a obrana státu*, 41.

<sup>33</sup> Bebler ed., 94.

and limitations. The top brass influenced political and social developments in communist Czechoslovakia to much lesser degree than elsewhere in communist-dominated countries.”<sup>34</sup>

In summary, the history of Czechoslovak civil-military relations seems to conform to the Huntington’s theory emphasizing the crucial role of a military professionalism for the resulting state of civil military relations, because true military professionals fully understand their role in the society and never intervene into politics. Particularly in the Czechoslovak case, the traditional civic concept of military professionalism seems to be what prevented the Czechoslovak officers from seizing political power during the most disturbing periods of the nation’s history.

## B. THE IMPACT OF A THREAT ENVIRONMENT

Next to the military professionalism, the threat environment is another crucial aspect of this study. In accordance with the Michael C. Desch’s structural theory of civil-military relations, threats, either external or internal, should be considered as conditioning phenomena, because their important effect is “general politicization of social forces and institutions,”<sup>35</sup> including the armed forces, thus they may also create favorable conditions for a military intervention into civilian matters, because military officers usually have a tendency to act independently from a civilian authority if they think this approach is necessary to save their threatened nation.

The principal argument that Desch brings forward is that “the strength of civilian control of the military in most countries is shaped fundamentally by structural factors, especially threats, which affect individual leaders, the military organization, the state, and society.”<sup>36</sup> Further, Desch deducts that different structural threat environments have direct impact on “the convergence and divergence of civilian and military views of the

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<sup>34</sup> Bebler ed., 94.

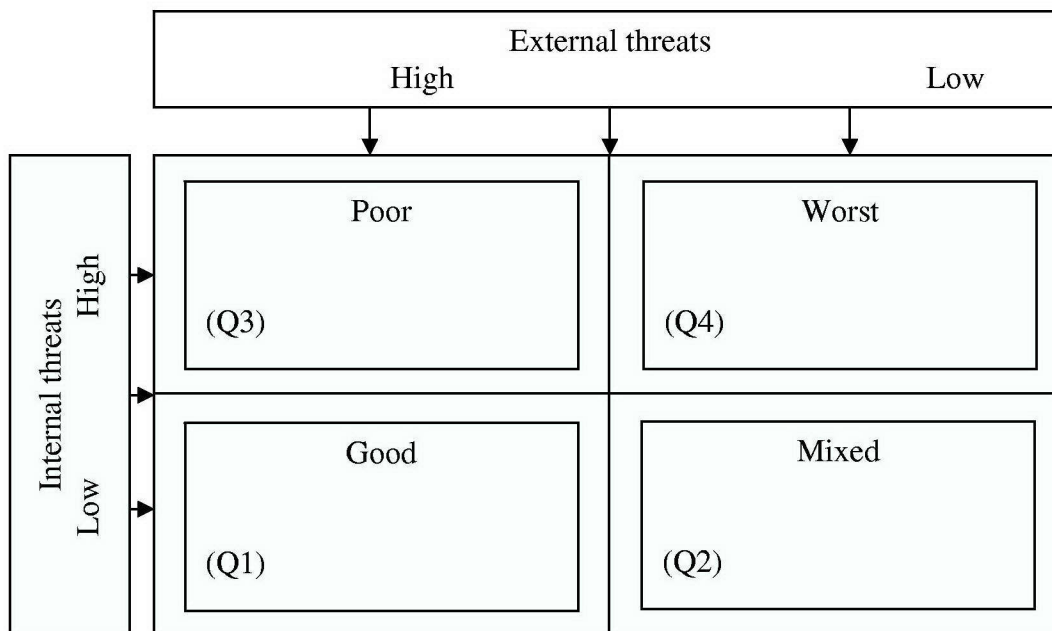
<sup>35</sup> Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 194.

<sup>36</sup> Michael C. Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security environment* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 11.

societal situation;<sup>37</sup> therefore, the threats are crucial in determining whether the military as an institution will become “a serious contender for control of a society.”<sup>38</sup>

The relationship between the strength of civilian control of the military and the structural threat environment is illustrated on Figure 1. Desch argues that high external and low internal threats (equal to quadrant Q1) should create the most stable civil-military relations, because the external challenge is likely to amalgamate the nation for self-defense. The absence of an internal threat enables that society is united and in order to counter a serious external threat it needs to mobilize fully against the external adversary. Therefore, as Desch deducts, such a situation strengthens intra-societal cohesion, hence it also strengthens the relationship and mutual support between military organizations and civilian structures.<sup>39</sup>

Figure 1. Civilian Control of the Military as a function of Location and Intensity of Threats.<sup>40</sup>



<sup>37</sup> Bebler ed., 13.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Desch, 14.

<sup>40</sup> Source: Ibid.

On the opposite side of the same spectrum is a state which faces low external and high internal threats, which results in the weakest civilian control of the military (Fig.1, Q4). Because “in such a situation, civilian institutions are also likely to be weak and deeply divided,”<sup>41</sup> it obviously makes military more likely to intervene in politics for patriotic reason to “save the nation” from internal chaos.

Desch openly admits that the cases of low external and low internal threats (Fig.1, Q2) as well as the cases of high external and high internal threats (Fig.1, Q3) are the most complicated, because under such conditions states usually face indeterminated threat environments.<sup>42</sup> A situation like that may produce different outputs, depending on particular cultural and historical settings; however, Desch asserts that we should expect low-level civil-military conflicts to emerge in Q2 circumstances, stemming from the internal divisions and rifts among different fractions within the society. By the same token, there is a possibility of internal tensions within the civilian society in Q4 circumstances, resulting in a volatile situation, which may cause internal collapse of civil-military relations and make the military incapable to counter external threats.<sup>43</sup>

Under all circumstances, the existence of a high external threat to an internally consolidated society strengthens civil-military relations, because it causes the affect of “rallying ‘round the flag.”<sup>44</sup> One example of this kind seems to be the empirical fact that in the history of modern warfare military missions targeting civilian population in order to demoralize civilians and cause a rift between the military and civilians have never succeeded. For example, during the Battle of England in WW II, “though German bombing raids killed 51,509 British civilians and damaged or destroyed one out of five British homes, they did not produce the widespread demoralization and civil unrest that the theorists of strategic bombing...had predicted.”<sup>45</sup> Similar pattern of counter productive effect of increased military threat against civilian population, resulting in rapidly improved civilian-military relations of the adversary, may be tracked in other

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<sup>41</sup> Desch, 14.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1995), 181.

events of World War II, for example in the Allied bombing of German cities or the German siege of Leningrad. Therefore, it may be possible to generalize the Overy's observation from the Battle of Britain in Desch's terms, that increased external threat usually results in civilian population being "galvanized" behind its leaders and fully supporting their military.<sup>46</sup>

From this viewpoint of Desch's theory, Czechoslovak civil-military relations are somewhat specific. Although two out of the four crises of the Czechoslovak history that are the subjects of this study two were caused by external threats (1938 and 1968), in both cases the impact on the society was a severe internal political crisis, which created strong incentives for the military to step in and intervene into civilian matters. Such an effect creates a specific case where external threats are multiplying existing internal divisions within the society, thus, the resulting effect is to significant extent similar to the impact of internal threats, because in this case the external pressures are quickly transformed into severe internal threats. In other words, even if the society appears stable and consolidated, the sudden emergence of an external threat can quickly throw it off balance by uncovering hidden internal conflicts. Therefore, the Desch's classification of threat impact does not seem to be relevant for Czechoslovak civil-military crises.

To sum up, although the relevance of the threat environment as a conditioning factor is enormously important because an extreme threat may create enormous incentives for a military intervention into politics, in the Czechoslovak case the output from extreme levels of external and internal threats seems to be the same, i.e. a deep societal crisis, including a severe crisis in civil-military relations. This seems to be caused by the fact that internal and external threats are somewhat intermingled and it is really difficult to distinguish between these two categories. This reasoning was principal for the selection of cases for this study of Czechoslovak civil-military relations; that is why it is irrelevant in this thesis whether the presented crises were caused by internal or external factors. Either way, the crises that are being studied in this thesis are distinguishable by

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<sup>46</sup> Overy, 181.

extreme threat levels; therefore, as the most tumultuous moments of the Czechoslovak history, they can be suitably used to test the efficacy of the civilian control of the military.

### C. IMPORTANCE OF PARTY-MILITARY RELATIONS

Under the conditions of East European communist-led totalitarian regimes, a specific problem of the civil-military relations was the quality and configuration of party-military relations. Condoleezza Rice emphasizes that in order to examine civil-military relations in such circumstances, “there is a need to suggest a framework which delineates the important features of the East European party-military relationship, identifies the major actors and posits the relationship between the actors.”<sup>47</sup> Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, the Czechoslovak party-military relations represent another set of intervening variables.

Although East block satellites commonly tried to copy the Soviet model of civil-military relations, they failed to reach similar results. Thus, Rice argues that while in the former Soviet Union the military had become fully integrated into the political system in which the communist party and the military shared a common “stake in the stability of the USSR, [because] this shared interest in the status quo had engendered considerable rapprochement between the communist party and its military,”<sup>48</sup> the output in East European communist countries was different. Although the model of party-military relations was at first sight identical, “the rapprochement...failed to materialize.”<sup>49</sup> As a result of this phenomenon, the East European militaries, including the Czechoslovak armed forces, were plagued by “suspect loyalty, problems of legitimacy and political isolation,”<sup>50</sup> and as such they remained vulnerable to the temptation of intervening into

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<sup>47</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “The politics of Client Command: Party-Military Relations in Czechoslovakia: 1948-1975” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Denver, Colorado, 1981), 14.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 15.

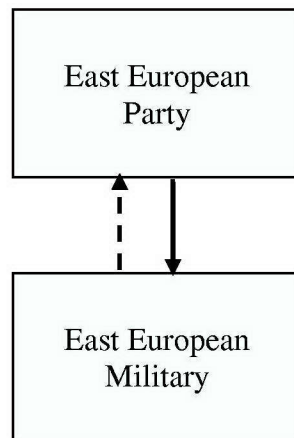
<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

civilian politics, which provides explanation why “the careful separation of civilian and military functions characteristic of communist systems did not withstand the strain of the crisis of 1981.”<sup>51</sup>

In order to address the issue in its whole complexity, Rice has developed a two-dimensional model of East European party-military relations. The first dimension deals with the domestic milieu and describes direct interaction between the party and the military, as shown on Fig.2.

Figure 2. The First Dimension (Domestic Context) of East European Party-Military Relations.<sup>52</sup>



However, it is necessary to keep in mind that Soviet Union was a crucial player within the communist block and because of the theory of the theory of communist internationalism, the USSR did not much respected the sovereignty of its satellites and openly intervened into their internal issues. The Soviet military interventions in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968) provide strong evidence about its policy of the “Big Brother.” That is why Rice brings in the combined model of the first and second dimension (Fig.3). Fig.3 shows that an East European military is first of all under the control of its domestic communist party, which “relies upon coercive, normative and

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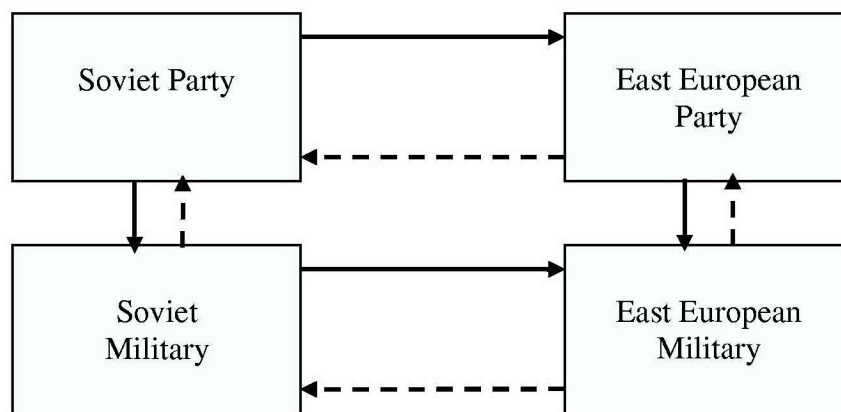
<sup>51</sup> Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army*, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 7.



utilitarian means,”<sup>53</sup> to pursue the goal of effective civilian control of its military. Nevertheless, “neither the party nor the military are independent actors in East Europe,”<sup>54</sup> because both of them are subject of the influence and interference of their Soviet counterparts. Thus, an East European military is under a direct control of its ruling party and, simultaneously, it is also being monitored and manipulated by the Soviet military, to which it reports via the East Bloc chain of command.

Figure 3. The First and Second Dimension (Soviet factor) of East European Party-Military Relations.<sup>55</sup>



Obviously, even the relationship between the parties is assymetrical and the Soviet party always has an upper hand. By using the second dimensional influence, the USSR had an important tool of control over its East European allies. In case when a ruling party started diverting from the official Marxist line, the Soviet leaders could make an attempt to use the military to military connection to change the situation in the particular country, which is exactly what happened in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Theoretically, they could apply the same policy in 1989; the reason that they did not so was that “the Soviet Union, shaken by its own economic, political and nationalist

<sup>53</sup> Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army*, 8.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>55</sup> Source: Ibid., 8.

problems, was no more a powerful patron for its satellites in 1989;”<sup>56</sup> so there was no more interest from the Soviet side to intervene into the internal political crises in Czechoslovakia.

In summary, the second dimensional ties are as important for the final output of civil-military relations as the first dimension, and depending on the circumstances the second dimension may be determining the party-military relationship, which, under the conditions of a communist regime, seems to be the most efficient way of the civilian control of the military.

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<sup>56</sup> Jiří Suk, *Labyrintem Revoluce* (Through the Labyrinth of Revolution) (Prague: Prostor Press, 2003), 52.

### III. CZECHOSLOVAK CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN CRISES

#### A. MUNICH CRISIS IN 1938

The Munich crisis in 1938 represents a case when the Czechoslovak military, under efficient democratic control of its civilian leadership, was ready to fight, after it had been for twenty years systematically being prepared to defend the nation. Consequently, the military was during a single day tasked to change radically the strategy and instead of fighting to defend the national territory, the Czechoslovak military was ordered to surrender national sovereignty without a fight. Needless to say, such a change immediately caused mutual mistrust between the military commanders and political leaders, which resulted in a sudden and unexpected crisis in civil-military relations. The fact that military in the end obeyed the orders from democratically elected civilian administration proves the high level of civilian control of the Czechoslovak military and the existence of Czechoslovak military professionalism.

From the theoretic point of view, the crisis explicitly represents the case of a state facing high external and high internal threat with the resulting classification of civilian control of the military as poor. However, it is extremely difficult to determine the exact level of the internal threat, because it is impossible to evaluate what would have been the reaction of the German-speaking population of Czechoslovakia, if Czechoslovak generals had seized power in a coup and gone to war with the Nazi Germany.

Probably the most correct description is a mixture of gradually growing external threats that were quickly transformed into severe internal threats. Undoubtedly, the external factors were main determinants of the crisis, as they caused deep political crisis in the country. Nevertheless, the external factors were also influencing the internal situation in Czechoslovakia and vice versa. This evaluation is based on the well documented facts that Nazi insurgency on the Czechoslovak frontier was largely controlled from Nazi Germany, internal policy of the Czechoslovak government was

under enormous pressure from British and French emissaries and the internal developments in Czechoslovakia were misused by Nazi propaganda prior to the negotiations in Munich.<sup>57</sup>

Until September 30, 1938, Czechoslovakia can be recognized as a fully democratic country, with efficiently working parliamentary system,<sup>58</sup> therefore except for the insurgent activities of the German Nazis in frontier regions the internal situation was relatively stable. The limited influence of Nazi insurgents is clearly visible from their failure to stage a widespread Nazi uprising in mid-September 1938. However, this situation dramatically changed after September 30, 1938. By accepting the Munich agreement, the Czechoslovak government lost all its political credibility and the result was a severe internal crisis, which dramatically changed the societal climate.

International political crisis in 1938, which culminated with the signature of Munich agreement on September 30 by top representatives of France, Great Britain, Nazi Germany and Italy, also represents a deep crisis in traditional orientation of Czechoslovak politicians on cooperation with Western powers, which had been perceived as principle guarantors of Czechoslovak statehood.

The principal mistake, made by the Czechoslovak political leaders in late summer 1938, was that they fully relied on security guaranties given to Czechoslovakia by Great Britain and France, because “they [Czechoslovak political leaders] believed that the whole world viewed the Czechoslovak-German crisis as a test of the ability of democracies to resist totalitarian manipulation.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, they failed to understand the two power were not ready to bleed their troops to defend Czechoslovakia’s independence. Hence, as the crisis started unfolding in July 1938, only few Czechoslovak political leaders understood the seriousness of the crisis. One of them was the Minister Mastný, who, “analyzed Czechoslovakia’s international situation in the most pessimistic terms. One should have no doubts, Mastný warned, about intentions of Adolf Hitler; he was

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<sup>57</sup> Crane and Crane, 107-124.

<sup>58</sup> In 1938, Czechoslovakia was the only parliamentary democracy east of the Elbe River; all neighboring countries were by then governed by an autocratic regime.

<sup>59</sup> Igor Lukes, *Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 225.

determined to smash Czechoslovakia by one means or another.”<sup>60</sup> However, the majority of the Czechoslovak political establishment did not realize that French and British governments favored appeasement of the Nazi Germany. Particularly the Czechoslovak president Beneš, who was also vested with the authority of the Czechoslovak supreme military commander, until the last moments of the crisis, “felt confident that France would remain faithful to its obligations.”<sup>61</sup>

Following the guidance from their civilian leadership, the Czechoslovak military was strongly determined to fight. Czechoslovak highest commanders firmly believed they were able to defend the nation hence they favored tough opposition against Nazi demands. This may be documented by the statement of General Ludvík Krejčí, then the chief of staff of the Czechoslovak Army, who on September 9 vociferously warned against any “move by leading statesmen which – rightly or wrongly – might convey even the semblance of weakness...The army is under impression that all the interminable negotiations and humiliations are the result of an over-estimation of the strength of our northern neighbor [Nazi Germany] and underestimation of our potential strength.”<sup>62</sup>

Eduard Beneš, states in his memoirs: “our [Czechoslovak] army, in spite of all deficiencies, which I did not conceal from myself, was at the time of Munich discussions, one of the best in Europe and that it was fighting fit in its morale as well as in its equipment.”<sup>63</sup> When the president speaks about deficiencies he means above all the fact the main defensive asset, which was a ring of frontier fortifications similar to the French Maginot Line, was still unfinished in 1938. Despite these deficiencies, “the army was well equipped; the fortifications were modern; the morale was unmatched. The Czechoslovak armaments industry was among the best in the world.”<sup>64</sup> Some of the German high commanders revealed after World War II that the German forces were not “strong enough militarily”<sup>65</sup> to invade Czechoslovakia in 1938. Among others, “Field

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<sup>60</sup> Lukes, 175.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Korbel, *Twentieth Century Czechoslovakia*, 130.

<sup>63</sup> Eduard Beneš, *Memoirs of Dr. Eduard Beneš: From Munich to New War and New Victory*, trans. Godfrey Lias. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1953), 29.

<sup>64</sup> Korbel, *Twentieth Century Czechoslovakia*, 145.

<sup>65</sup> Crane and Crane, 168.

Marshal Wilhelm Keitel and Marshal Fritz von Mannstein candidly admitted at the Nuremberg military trials that they did not believe Germany then [in 1938] had the power to break through the barrier [of the Czechoslovak fortifications].”<sup>66</sup>

Another boost to the morale and self-confidence of Czechoslovak troops occurred in two mobilizations in 1938. First of all, “the partial mobilization of the Czechoslovak army in May [1938] turned, at least for a fleeting moment, into a near triumph for the Prague government.”<sup>67</sup> As the crisis gradually escalated in September 1938, “there were calls for a strong military cabinet to defend the integrity of the [Czechoslovak] state. A new cabinet, under General Jan Syrový, was installed and on September 23 a decree of general mobilization was issued.”<sup>68</sup> The general mobilization transformed into the manifestation of national self-consciousness. During the highly organized mobilization the Czechoslovak troops deployed into defensive positions on the national borders. After the Czechoslovak military fully mobilized, “the [Czechoslovak] republic was properly prepared for war.”<sup>69</sup>

Last event documenting the preparedness of the Czechoslovak military to war, while also proving strong civilian control of the military, was the deployment of the army against Nazi insurgents rioting in frontier regions of Czechoslovakia. In reaction to the ethnical unrest against non-German citizens in Czechoslovak frontier districts with a majority of German population (Sudetenland), the Czechoslovak military showed great restraint as it reinforced law enforcement authorities during the period of a state of emergency on 13 and 14 September 1938, as:

Reinforcements of [Czechoslovak] police officers as well as troops calmly marched into areas that had been captured by SdP [Sudeten Nazi Party] paramilitary units. When the shooting stopped, the final tally was twenty-seven dead (sixteen Czechs, eleven Sudeten Germans). This was testimony to the discipline and self restraint of the [Czechoslovak] authorities, especially if one considers that the Freikops [German paramilitaries] were merely groups of illicitly armed civilians who

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<sup>66</sup> Crane and Crane, 167.

<sup>67</sup> Lukes, 173.

<sup>68</sup> Ihor Gawdiak, ed. *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1987), 43.

<sup>69</sup> Beneš, *Memoirs*, 29.

enjoyed no legal standing under Czechoslovak or international law and had no protection as combatants under law of war.<sup>70</sup>

The critical moment in the Czechoslovak civil-military relations came after the Munich agreement was signed on 30 September 1938, because by surrendering to Nazi Germany at about eleven thousand square miles of national territory including 86 percent of its chemical industry, 86 percent of its glass industry, and 70 percent of its iron and steel enterprises,<sup>71</sup> Czechoslovakia in fact ceased its existence as a sovereign state. Consequently, there was a widespread felling of betrayal among Czech population, and especially among military officers. The point may be illustrated by the statement of a Czechoslovak president's secretary Drtina, who opined that "Czechoslovakia should surrender or fight to bitter end. No nation...could lose liberty without struggle, unless it was ready to accept moral disintegration."<sup>72</sup>

"The Czechoslovak capitulation precipitated an outburst of national indignation."<sup>73</sup> Many blamed the president and the government for the national catastrophe, since "in the final analysis, the decision to capitulate was exclusive responsibility of the Czechoslovak government."<sup>74</sup> Consequently, in the evening of 30 September 1938, "crowds on the streets of Prague thundered with anger and frustration". Under this volatile situation many politicians from different parts of the political spectrum called upon the military to seize the power, restore the order and defend the national integrity against the troops of the Nazi Germany. The Communist leaders were particularly active this way. They tried to exploit the situation, with the intention "to overthrow the government that had accepted the Munich *Diktat* [agreement], to mobilize the masses, and coordinate the party's policy with the anticapitulationist elements in the Army's General Staff."<sup>75</sup> The leader of the Czechoslovak Communists, Klement Gottwald tried to appeal to a military coup by making an emotional speech in which he said: "Barefoot Ethiopians, without arms, defended themselves, and we yield! Look at

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<sup>70</sup> Lukes, 213.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>73</sup> Gawdiak, ed., 43.

<sup>74</sup> Korbel, *Twentieth Century Czechoslovakia*, 125.

<sup>75</sup> Lukes, 255.

Spanish people, how they defended themselves! We have a great army; the nation is united!...We should demonstrate our strength. It is still not too late. The Munich demands should not be tolerated.”<sup>76</sup>

Favorably to these attempts to entice the military to seize power, there was a widespread disillusionment and bitterness within the military, as majority of the officers and non-commissioned troops felt being betrayed by their government. Remarkably, the Czechoslovak military stayed loyal to the government, which clearly signals strong civilian control of the military, regardless of sharp differences in military and civilian ideas. Prime Minister Syrový, who as an army general and a national hero of World War I had been held in high esteem among both military and public,<sup>77</sup> followed reason and calmed down highly running emotions by his statement that “the four powers had given Czechoslovakia a choice between being murdered and committing suicide.”<sup>78</sup> Thus, his position was very close to the opinion of President Beneš, who “had grave doubts about the army’s ability to offer meaningful resistance; he believed that resistance was suicidal, and he wanted the nation to live.”<sup>79</sup> Apparently, the President believed the acceptance of, the Munich agreement, however humiliating for moral consciousness of the nation, was a pragmatic solution, securing physical survival of the nation. George F. Kenan, who was from September 1938 to early 1942 assigned to a US diplomatic post in Prague,<sup>80</sup> shared this point of view. In his personal notes on the Munich crisis, written in early October 1938, he considers that:

Most importantly of all, it [Munich settlement] preserved for the exciting tasks of the future a magnificent young generation – disciplined, industrious, and physically fit – which would undoubtedly have been sacrificed if the solution had been the romantic one of hopeless resistance rather than the humiliating but truly heroic one of realism.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Korbel, *Twentieth Century Czechoslovakia*, 140-41.

<sup>77</sup> David Kelly, *The Czech Fascist Movement 1922-1942* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 142.

<sup>78</sup> Lukes, 254.

<sup>79</sup> Korbel, *Twentieth Century Czechoslovakia*, 149.

<sup>80</sup> John Lamberton Harper, *American Vision of Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 176.

<sup>81</sup> George F. Kenan, *From Prague after Munich: Diplomatic Papers 1938-1940* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), 5.



The restrained reaction of the Czechoslovak military leaders enabled that the social unrest was subdued by the police and, “by nightfall, the demonstrators went home, and the army, its *raison d’être* trampled into dust, began its painful retreat from the [frontier] fortresses.”<sup>82</sup> Obviously, the retreat without a fight was perceived as an enormous humiliation and embarrassment among the soldiers, including the highest commanders. This situation resulted in an incident, in which Czechoslovakia moved historically closest to a military coup d’état:

As the German army moved, step by step, into the individual zones of the Sudeten territory, and the Czechoslovak soldiers prepared to withdraw from the zone which included the fortifications, a last attempt was made to stop avalanche. A group of generals, led by Krejčí, planned to take over the government and even arrest [president] Beneš. Some civilian leaders supported this plan. On October 3, four generals saw Beneš and, threatening to depose him if he refused, demanded his abdication. Allegedly, Beneš rejected the request, saying that he did not officially take cognizance of it, for if he did, he would have to punish the generals in his capacity as a supreme commander. The generals left, the plan aborted.<sup>83</sup>

Nonetheless, this isolated incident in Czechoslovak civil-military relations should be rightly understood as an evidence of deep desperation among the Czechoslovak generals. President Beneš later described the situation this way: “I saw tears in the eyes of some of the generals, and I heard those saying words of plea, warning and threat. They never crossed the tolerable line of subordination to the supreme commander, though their pleas and warnings were strong.”<sup>84</sup> The fact that the rebelling generals neither had any sophisticated plan nor they resorted to violence against the president clearly demonstrates they had not been seriously determined to seize political power and the leadership of the nation. Instead, they obeyed the instruction from the government which resulted in a non-violent solution of the crisis. As Pavel Šrámek mentions in his book, generals Syrový and Krejčí also visited the parliament on October 3, where Krejčí in his speech demanded formation of “an authoritative administration without political parties and parliament, and

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<sup>82</sup> Lukes, 255.

<sup>83</sup> Korbel, *Twentieth Century Czechoslovakia*, 143.

<sup>84</sup> Pavel Šrámek, *Československá armáda v roce 1938* (Czechoslovak Army in 1938) (Brno, Náchod, Czechia: Společnost přátel československého opevnění, 1996), 48.

he directly proposed its members,”<sup>85</sup> but after this attempt also fell through the anti-capitulation military junta quickly dissolved.

Nevertheless, both the military and the civic society paid dire price for not defending the country, because, “the wounds (physical and psychological) caused by the Czechoslovak army’s failure to resist were as deep as maybe more treacherous than whatever injuries Czechoslovakia would have sustained in war against Germany.”<sup>86</sup> Czechoslovak public opinion negatively perceived that twenty years after gaining the independence, “nation lost it without firing a shot.”<sup>87</sup> As a result, the prestige of the military as an institution was considerably low for the next several decades. The military only started getting back full respect among public in early 1990s, after Czechoslovak troops successfully participated in Gulf War I and the Balkans peacekeeping missions. Numerous Czechoslovak soldiers of all ranks felt personally responsible for removing the stain of Munich by fighting against Nazism anywhere; they emigrated and later fought bravely as volunteers on the fronts of World War II. Others were actively involved in the domestic resistance movement against Nazi occupation. Hence, even though “deprived of the chance to fight, and perhaps die, on the battlefield in the fall of 1938, many [Czechoslovak] officers found a way to resist the Third Reich nevertheless.”<sup>88</sup>

In summary, the performance of the Czechoslovak military especially during the last stage of the Munich crisis, which means after the acceptance of the Munich ultimatum by the Czechoslovak government, provides convincing evidence of fully consolidated civil-military relations. The fact that the military followed the guidelines from democratically elected civilian administration even if it was in sharp conflict with the morale principles and traditional values of the military professionals gives clear evidence of a strong civilian control of the Czechoslovak military.

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<sup>85</sup> Šrámek, 48.

<sup>86</sup> Lukes, 252.

<sup>87</sup> Korbel, *Twentieth Century Czechoslovakia*, 149.

<sup>88</sup> Lukes, 255.

## B. COMMUNIST TAKEOVER IN 1948

The fact that for specific reasons the Czechoslovak military stayed neutral during the Czechoslovak governmental crisis in February 1948, which quickly escalated into “de facto” installation of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia, is a remarkable and specific case from the perspective of the theory of civil military relations. Czechoslovakia in the February crisis should be characterized as a state facing low external and high internal threats, a situation which, according to the theory, results in the worst civilian control of the military, thus it is also “making direct military intervention [a coup d'état] more likely.”<sup>89</sup> The military non-intervention into civilian matters in time of a deep political turmoil provides evidence about deeply rooted traditions of civilian control in the Czechoslovak civil-military relations, in spite of the fact that after World War II the reconstructed Czechoslovak military officer corps was subjected to massive infiltration of communist cadres in 1945-48.<sup>90</sup>

Apart from its civil-military dimension, the crisis is unique in other ways, which consequently had significant impact on civil-military relations during the crisis. First of all, this is probably the only known case when the Communist seized power in accordance with democratic political principles; i.e. in a fully constitutional way. Another important aspect is that the crisis originated in a political action of democratic parties participating in then Czechoslovak government, which was the demission of twelve democratic ministers. Ironically, by waging this action these parties unintentionally prepared ideal conditions for the Communist takeover, which was, from the legal point of view in full accordance with the democratic constitution, although the Czechoslovak Communists certainly broke moral traditions of political culture by putting enormous pressure on the government and public by using biased propaganda and staging numerous demonstrations of mass power. Hence, in full accordance with the theory of the breakdown of democratic regimes presented by Linz and Stepan, the Czechoslovak communists embarked on seizing political power by combining a clandestine subversion with “a formally legal process of transfer of power. In that process the neutrality, if not

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<sup>89</sup> Desch, 15.

<sup>90</sup> Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army*, 42-3.

the cooperation of the armed forces or a sector of them has become [*sic*] decisive”<sup>91</sup> for the success of their power-grabbing scheme.

During the crisis, there was present a substantially viable external threat. As the crisis started unfolding, the Soviet leaders were inclined to intervene; particularly Stalin “pointedly suggested that [the Czechoslovak Communist leader and then the Prime Minister] Gottwald should ask the Soviet government for military assistance.”<sup>92</sup> However, the Czechoslovak communists did not venture to invite foreign troops into the country. Officially, Gottwald considered it unnecessary, “because the party was in full command of the situation, including armed forces, and that Soviet intervention would significantly complicate the power confrontation both domestically and internationally.”<sup>93</sup> While the former sentence of his explanation sounds like a political boasting, because during the crisis the Communists did not have military under full control, as it will be explained further, the latter one most probably gives the right answer. If Soviets had intervened militarily in February 1948, it would have deprived the Czechoslovak Communists of the public support they had earned by their misleading propaganda and populist policy. Either way, the result was that the role of external factors in the crisis remained marginal.

The Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia needs to be understood in broader context of the European history. The whole process, leading to the crisis, actually started in the middle of World War II. After the impressive series of the Soviet victories in 1943-44 and with the USA and Great Britain hesitating to open a second front in France, it started becoming clear that the post-war Czechoslovakia would be in the Soviet sphere of interest and its traditional diplomatic orientation on the West would have to be altered. The Czechoslovak president Beneš, in reaction to his negotiations with Soviet leaders and Czechoslovak Communists in December 1943, writes: “Is our [Czechoslovak] national culture Eastern or Western? And what inferences can be drawn from this? Indeed, our conduct during the war sometimes gave the West the impression that we are preparing to

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91 Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan ed. *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 15.

92 Karel Kaplan, *Short march: The Communist Takeover in Czechoslovakia 1945-1948* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1987), 175.

93 Ibid.

change over from our former Western cultural orientation to a so-called Eastern one.”<sup>94</sup> After Czechoslovakia was reconstituted in the aftermath of the war, the political influence of the KSČ (Komunistická strana Československa – the Czechoslovak Communist Party) was much greater than before World War II. To explain this phenomenon one needs to understand, that after the six-year period of Nazi occupation and cruel oppression, “bitter memories of the betrayal by the West in 1938 and of the great economic depression of the 1930s pushed many to the left of the political spectrum.”<sup>95</sup>

The Communists claimed it was necessary to have a strong and centralized government to control efficiently the post-war reconstruction of the country; therefore, in the years 1945-1948 Czechoslovakia was ruled by the government of national unity, so called “National Front”<sup>96</sup>, which was a joint platform of the Communist party and the democratic parties, and the Communists were gradually gaining dominance in it. Following the instructions from Moscow, they were concealedly placing party members and sympathizers into key government positions. Thus, “the communists [*sic*] were able to suppress noncommunist opposition, place party members in position of power, and create solid basis for a takeover attempt.”<sup>97</sup> The democratic parties in the government vehemently protested this stealthy usurpation of power, but with little to no effect. Finally, on February 20, 1948, in protest of the Communist subversion, “the twelve noncommunist ministers resigned, in part, to induce Beneš to call for early elections; Communist losses were anticipated owing to popular disapproval of recent KSČ tactics.”<sup>98</sup> Their plan relied on the constitutional procedures, because “by resigning, they would precipitate a government crisis, the President would refuse to accept their resignation, but would declare the government incapable of performing its functions, and call for new elections.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Beneš, *Memoirs*, 281.

<sup>95</sup> Jaroslav Krejčí and Pavel Machonin. *Czechoslovakia, 1918-92: A Laboratory for Social Change* (New York: St. Martin's Press, in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1996), 172.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>97</sup> Gawdiak, ed., 56

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Paul E. Zinner, *Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia, 1918-48* (New York: Frederic A. Praeger, Inc., 1963), 220.

Unfortunately, their plan was poorly conceived, so “this ill-timed drastic move...shocked Beneš, who had not been previously briefed.”<sup>100</sup> Meanwhile, the Communists quickly seized the opportunity and started heavy campaign to force the president to accept the resignation and coopt a leftist government. In order to win public support they mobilized masses. As a tool of popular control of public assets, they organized so-called “action committees.” These, “Communist ‘action committees’ that had been formed ‘all over the country’ seized a number of ministries.”<sup>101</sup> This action deprived the resigning democratic ministers from an access to their supporters within the governmental staff.

Next, the Communists were also “organizing and equipping the workers’ militia, an auxiliary armed formation created by the Communist Party and directly subordinated to its Presidium.”<sup>102</sup> Although these irregular armed units were not used in a violent way, the Communists skillfully used them in 1948 crisis to demonstrate their power and intimate their political opponents, as “the militia was not needed, but once armed, it was called out to give demonstration of its might before the citizenry of the capitol.”<sup>103</sup>

On February 25, as another attempt to step up the pressure on the President, “a general strike was called to persuade Beneš to accept the moderates’ resignation.”<sup>104</sup> The president was in a difficult position. “The democratic parties should have been prepared to give him the strongest possible moral support.”<sup>105</sup> But instead, they remained frightened and passive. An important factor was the physical condition of President Beneš, because he had a stroke in the fall of 1947.<sup>106</sup> Finally, on February 25, 1948 President Beneš “accepted the resignations of the dissident ministers and received a new cabinet list from Gottwald, thus completing the communist takeover.”<sup>107</sup> Within the new government, the Communist Party occupied all crucial seats and, “the remaining seats

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100 Crane and Crane, 313.

101 Ibid., 314.

102 Zinner, 207.

103 Ibid., 211.

104 Crane and Crane, 315.

105 Zinner, 221.

106 Ibid.

107 Gawdiak, ed., 57.

were occupied by members of the non-Communist parties who were totally dependent on, and without exception subservient to, the Communists.”<sup>108</sup>

In order to understand the position of the Czechoslovak military in the February crisis in the context, one has to understand how the military was reconstructed after Czechoslovakia was liberated from Nazi troops in May 1945. The nucleus of the newly formed military forces was based on the Czechoslovak units abroad, who had fought against fascists mostly in Great Britain and the Soviet Russia.<sup>109</sup> Theoretically, the units returning from the West were supposed to create a balanced military structure with the units returning from the East. In reality, owing to the fact that the Red Army liberated major part of the Czechoslovak territory, “The governmental blueprint, the Košice Accord of April, 1945, granted the [Czechoslovak] communists and the U.S.S.R. broad influence in the recreation of the armed forces.”<sup>110</sup> The Communist Party took full advantage from this extraordinary measure and used their influence to place officers coming from Russia into important posts. Moreover, “The First Army on the Territory of the U.S.S.R. was to form the core of the officer group....the air force, primarily housed in London, was to be next in importance [i.e. less important].”<sup>111</sup> The truth is that the First Army Corps fought bravely on the East front since 1943 and it also successfully participated in the liberation of the Czechoslovak territory. In contrast with this, the Czechoslovak army in Great Britain stayed idle for most of the war, with the exception of its participation in low-intensity operations in the siege of Dunkirk from the end of 1944. Therefore, it could be easily justified that the new military structures should be primarily based on the battle-experienced troops of the First Army Corps. The situation in the Air Force was completely different, since Czechoslovak airmen fought in World War II predominantly in the ranks of the British Royal Air Force; this explains why after the communist seized power in 1948, they concluded that “in the Czechoslovak Air Force at

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<sup>108</sup> Kaplan, 185.

<sup>109</sup> Organic Czechoslovak units, which reported directly to the Czechoslovak government in exile, were during WW II based only in two countries, Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

<sup>110</sup> Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army*, 33.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 39.

least 80 out of every 100 officers and enlisted are politically ‘dubitable’ and those would hesitate to fight against the West.”<sup>112</sup>

In spite of the massive Communist efforts to infiltrate officer corps and thus stealthy gain control over the military, the Czechoslovak military forces in 1948 were still, “essentially apolitical masses of troops, most of whose officers were traditionally non-political.”<sup>113</sup> General Hasal, who emigrated to the West on 2 July 1948, reveals that:

From May 1945 the Soviets pressured Czechoslovak military leadership to reorganize the army and air force according to the Red Army standards. During the following three years Moscow was sending Soviet military experts to coordinate military cooperation between both military forces. But the project failed, which explains why the Soviet circles do not trust the Czechoslovak military.<sup>114</sup>

The fact that the military leaders did not consider using the military to solve an internal crisis may be found in the attitude of the General Staff to the formulation of defense and security policy in January 1948: “For the moment, there is no threat, there is no need to act hastily, we can work with circumspection, consider what is possible and necessary.”<sup>115</sup> As the generals did not see any need for the military to stir internal politics, the Communist leaders could not count on military in their takeover plans. As a result of this development, there was a danger of an internal conflict inside the military, because “the military elite was still divided between pro-Soviet and pro-Western officers and the loyalty of the officer cadre was equally suspect in the eyes of the communists and of Beneš....[but] The armed forces remained neutral in the political crisis. The military role was usurped by the militia and the police.”<sup>116</sup>

The Communist distrust for the military provides evidence that despite the prolonged and purposeful undermining of democratic principles in the military the KSČ

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112 Antonín Hasal, “Proč jsem opustil Prahu: Československá armáda po Únoru 1948” (Why I left Prague: the Czechoslovak military after February 1948)” (Prague: Vojenské Rozhledy 2, 2001), available from [http://www.army.cz/avis/vojenske\\_rozhledy/2001\\_2/100.htm](http://www.army.cz/avis/vojenske_rozhledy/2001_2/100.htm), accessed on 16 Feb 2005.

113 Gordon H. Skilling, ed., *Czechoslovakia 1918-88: Seventy Years of Independence* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 60.

114 Hasal, available from [http://www.army.cz/avis/vojenske\\_rozhledy/2001\\_2/100.htm](http://www.army.cz/avis/vojenske_rozhledy/2001_2/100.htm)

115 Josef Hodic, *Military Political Views Prevalent in the Czechoslovak Army 1948-1968* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1979), 8.

116 Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army*, 54-5.



failed to subjugate the military. Nevertheless, the Communists were quite aware of the success of their constitutional coup required to control the security situation in the nation, because without it they could not secure their demagogic political campaign. For this reason, “the Communists concentrated their efforts on expanding their positions in the security apparatus and on monopolizing control over their two most important units, intelligence and State Security.”<sup>117</sup> Even American materials, based on the reports from the American Embassy in Prague, confirm that “nonparticipation of the armed forces contrasted sharply with the openly pro-Communist role played by the police.”<sup>118</sup>

However, “The army’s neutrality cannot be dismissed as an unimportant factor in the communist rise to power.”<sup>119</sup> The most accurate description is that in 1948 the Czechoslovak military was deceived and manipulated in a similar way as the Communists deceived and manipulated public opinion. Without a doubt, the armed forces were influenced by “the spectacular show of strength of the various pro-Communist mass organizations, who took to the streets to make know their point of view.”<sup>120</sup> This circumstances seems be explaining why on February 23, “General Svoboda, the officially non-partisan but pro-Communist army commander, ... on behalf of the army, made it clear that it would remain faithful to the people and not become the instrument of any individual or group of people.”<sup>121</sup>

The simple truth is that the majority of the military commanders in 1948, including the top brass, were not conscious supporters of the Communist ideology; instead, they were deceived victims of the communist manipulation with facts, an art in which the Communists had traditionally been brilliant. This explanation is supported by the fact that, according to Rice, after the Communists consolidated their regime they decided to replace the professional officer corps with “politically acceptable” cadres, even if it was at the expense of expertise.<sup>122</sup> During this period, which was called the

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<sup>117</sup> Kaplan, 133.

<sup>118</sup> Walter Ullman, *The United States in Prague, 1945-1948* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, distributed by New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 150.

<sup>119</sup> Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army*, 55.

<sup>120</sup> Ullman, 149-50.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>122</sup> Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army*, 62.

formation of the ‘Army of a Socialist Type’ and lasted from 1948 to 1956, most of the February 1948 highest ranking officers, including general Svoboda, were severely purged. Obviously, the Communist regime would not have purged them if these officers had been considered as true believers in Marxism-Leninism.

The pressing question is why the military did not step in to save the democracy in Czechoslovakia. The simple answer is the military did not get orders to do so and staging an internal security operation without proper orders was against all principles of the Czechoslovak military professionalism. In relation to this issue, it is necessary to question Condoleezza Rice’s explanation, that the failure of President Beneš to order the army to resist the communist takeover can be explained in terms of his doubt on the efficacy of such a solution, because of the strong communist infiltration of the military.<sup>123</sup> It is necessary to understand that President Beneš was a politician of integrity, deeply devoted to democratic principles in political conduct, as he addressed this issue in his response to the letter of the Czechoslovak Communist party: “You know my deep democratic convictions. I cannot but remain faithful to it at this moment as in opinion democracy is the only solid and permanent basis for human life and honesty and dignity.”<sup>124</sup> Given his negative experience with the use of force from the Munich crisis in 1938 and from the years of World War II, it was highly improbable that he would use the military to resolve a political crisis, which in its nature would be sharply undemocratic. This is what the democratic parties involved in the 1948 crisis failed to grasp, as they relied too much on the President, because “they could not have foreseen that, even in this dispute, Beneš would not use his authority, and that as a supreme commander he would not use the army. However, neither his political thinking nor his recent behaviour [*sic*] gave them any cause to assume that he would.”<sup>125</sup> Mr. Smutný, the President’s aide, who was staying close to him in February crisis, describes it bluntly: “How was it possible for the

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<sup>123</sup> Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army*, 55.

<sup>124</sup> Josef Korbel, *The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia 1938-1948: The Failure of Coexistence* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1959), 233.

<sup>125</sup> Kaplan, 178.

President to launch a counter-revolution against his own Prime Minister, who, with his own [party] people had succeeded without resistance in getting hold of all positions right of the first day?”<sup>126</sup>

Some military theorists assert that instead of remaining neutral the military should have been deployed to crush the Communist takeover; these individuals are underscoring the Communist ability to manipulate the public opinion. In 1948 the Czechoslovak society was so polarized that any attempt to use a military force to resolve the February crisis would have inevitably resulted in a societal disarray, or maybe even in a civil war. Unfortunately, in February 1948 the Czechoslovak military could not do anything to prevent political developments leading to the forty years of the Communist dictatorship, unless it would have actually staged a military coup.

On the whole, the resistance against all Communist attempts to cause internal political disintegration of the traditional military values is a remarkable achievement of the Czechoslovak military professionalism. This phenomenon can be credited to combined effect of many attributes of the Czechoslovak military culture. First of all, “there was greater continuity in the ‘new Czechoslovak army’ than in Poland or the Axis states.”<sup>127</sup> In other words, the professional traditions of the pre-war Czechoslovak military guided the soldiers to stay neutral to political campaigning and propaganda. Apparently, the Communists were wrong as they assumed that the Czechoslovak soldiers returning from the East would automatically become Communist supporters. On the contrary, many of these soldiers had a first hand experience with the practices of the KGB and political commissars, therefore they knew how cruel and oppressive the Stalin’s regime was against its own people. As a result, these servicemen stayed loyal to the democratically elected authorities and the KSČ could not count on them in February 1948. Another aspect underscoring the negative attitude of Czechoslovak military officers toward the Communist ideology is the heritage of the Czechoslovak Legion in World War I. The traditions of negative experience from the fight against Bolsheviks

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<sup>126</sup> Korbelt, *The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia*, 225.

<sup>127</sup> Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army*, 44.

caused that “unlike the general Czechoslovak population, many members of the military [former legionaries] had been involved in bitter experience which involved Soviet military and political officers.”<sup>128</sup>

In brief, by remaining neutral in February 1948 constitutional crisis, the Czechoslovak military demonstrated its loyalty to the civilian leaders, thus confirming deep traditions of the Czechoslovak military professionalism, regardless of all attempts to undermine it ideologically. The military could not be blamed for the fact that the Communists adroitly misused the military’s neutrality in their sneak political game.

### C. SOVIET-LEAD MILITARY INTERVENTION IN 1968

The military intervention of five East-block countries in August 1968 is certainly the most complicated case of the four societal crises examined in this thesis. A unique feature of this crisis is the fact that the reforming process of the Marxist regime, which under no circumstances can be recognized as a serious internal crisis because the ruling Communist Party started and controlled the reforms that were widely supported across the society, was abruptly turned into a serious internal crisis by the surprising military intervention of the communist nations, allied with Czechoslovakia in the Warsaw Pact. Thus, the situation was actually similar to the developments during the 1938 crisis, because in 1968 the external threat was also quickly transformed into a severe internal threat, by causing civic disturbances and the split of society. The fact that the military complied with the orders from civilian leaders, with the exception of isolated incidents, shows strong civilian control of the Czechoslovak military in 1968 crisis.

Under the conditions of the communist regime, the civil - military relations were deformed by strong party-military relations, and further complicated by the first and the second dimensional ties to the Soviet party and military structures (Fig.3), as explained in chapter two of this thesis. These exclusive relations, based to great extent on the standard operating procedures and the chain of command of the Warsaw Pact, and informal ties among top national commanders, provided the Soviet leadership with significant influence in Czechoslovak military matters. Nevertheless, via the party influence the

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<sup>128</sup> Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army*, 44.

system secured an efficient civilian control of the Czechoslovak military, which was fully accepting the superiority of the political leadership, thus providing convincing evidence about strong civilian control. Hence, the Soviet failure to use the second dimension to direct the Czechoslovak military against its civilian leadership, i.e. the reform-promoting Communist party, provides another piece of evidence of the strong civilian control of the military.

Raison d'être for the intervention was that the Soviet leadership was alarmed by "the reform movement of the late 1960s, popularly dubbed the 'Prague Spring' [which] was an effort mainly by the Czechs (with some Slovak support) to restructure Marxist-Leninist socialism in a way more suitable to their respective historical, cultural, and economic circumstances."<sup>129</sup> Concerning the civil-military relations, "the party and military were moving together toward reform and when the Soviets were unable to pressure the ČLA [Czechoslovak armed forces] elite directly, it was obvious that the rapprochement was at the expense of Soviet influence."<sup>130</sup>

As a result and based on the decision of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee, on August 20, 1968 at 11 P.M. Czechoslovakia was invaded by the allied armies of the Warsaw Pact, with the exception of Rumania. Both the Czechoslovak military and political leaders were caught by surprise; therefore, "there was nobody to oppose or stop the overwhelmingly powerful thrust which engaged close to half a million troops."<sup>131</sup>

Facing the situation where invading troops were in the depth of the Czechoslovak territory, the government decided that military defense would be counterproductive and asked the citizens to stay out of any violent actions against the invaders. These instructions were issued in the form of the proclamation of the Presidium of the Central Committee, which says: "The presidium calls upon all citizens of the Republic to keep the peace and not resist the advancing armies, because the defense of our state borders is now impossible. For this reason, our Army, the security forces, and the People's Militia

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<sup>129</sup> Gawdiak, ed., 75.

<sup>130</sup> Rice, "The politics of Client Command," 254.

<sup>131</sup> Tad Szulc, *Czechoslovakia Since World War II* (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), 379.

were not given orders to defend the country.”<sup>132</sup> Thus, similar to the situation in the Munich crisis in 1938, “the Czechoslovak argument was subsequently that in the certainty of defeat no government has the right to sacrifice its people.”<sup>133</sup> The political leadership of the country again selected realistic solution which raises delicate question of national honor vs. long term practicability; apparently the Czechoslovak politicians preferred the latter quality over the former one.<sup>134</sup>

The proclamation in its consequences ruined the political plot to justify the intervention, as it was originally intended by Soviet ideologists. The original scenario was to quickly replace the reform government by a puppet regime, which would issue a state of emergency and ask the Warsaw pact for “fraternal assistance.”<sup>135</sup> , a massive wave of popular protests started immediately after August 20, as “the Czechoslovak population was virtually unanimous in its repudiation of the Soviet action.”<sup>136</sup> The protesters generally complied with the government insistence on not provoking violence, so they limited their actions to passive resistance and movement of non-cooperation with the occupants. Important attribute of this movement was non-cooperation of mass media employees, hence, “the Soviets found themselves in the extraordinary position of controlling the country militarily and being unable to give the Czechoslovaks their version of what they were doing there.”<sup>137</sup>

Unable to set up a collaborating regime, the Soviets flew leading Czechoslovak politicians for talks in Moscow, which resulted in an agreement stating that: “the troops of the allied countries that temporarily entered the territory of Czechoslovakia will not interfere in the internal affairs....Agreement was reached on the terms of the withdrawal of these troops from the territory of Czechoslovakia, depending on the normalization of the situation in the Republic.”<sup>138</sup> This vague formulation must be understood as a compromise, giving plenty of leeway to both sides. However, it was a remarkable

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<sup>132</sup> Szulc, 380-81.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 382.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Gawdiak, ed., 65.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>137</sup> Szulc, 381.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 430.

achievement that the Czechoslovak politicians, who were in a position of representatives of a conquered country, managed to maintain to significant degree their political freedom of decision.

Nevertheless, behind the scene the Soviet leaders kept working fervently to remove the Czechoslovak reformists from the government and form a puppet government that would return Czechoslovakia on a Marxist path. Although they had ideal conditions under the occupation regime, they only succeeded after April 1969, when Gustav Husák assumed the post of the first secretary of the Communist Party and consequently, as David W. Paul states, “he presided over dismantling of the reforms and worked to re-solidify his country’s ties with the Soviet Union.”<sup>139</sup>

There has been a wide discussion whether Czechoslovakia should have fought in August 1968. The author and renowned Czechoslovak dissident Ivan Sviták believes that Czechoslovak military should have fought, even under desperately unfavorable conditions with the prospect that “the military resistance could not have lasted longer than several days and the consequences would have been similar to those in [1956] Hungary.”<sup>140</sup> The best answer is that the output of the crisis most probably would not have changed in case of the Czechoslovak armed resistance against the occupation, except that the whole process would have been bloodier.<sup>141</sup>

The truth is that the Czechoslovak military was not ready to fight its allies, because all its military structure, communications and equipment was unified with the invading forces. A detail illustrating the point is the fact that all the military vehicles of invading armies were painted with a wide white stripe to distinguish them from the identical equipment used by the Czechoslovak military.<sup>142</sup> Another important factor is that the Czechoslovak military was only responsible for the protection of the border with

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<sup>139</sup> David W. Paul, *Czechoslovakia: Profile of a Socialist Republic at the Crossroads of Europe* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), 56.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>141</sup> Vladimir V. Kusin, *From Dubček to Charter 77: A Study of ‘Normalization’ in Czechoslovakia 1968-1978* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1978), 12.

<sup>142</sup> Szulc, 385.

the non-socialist countries, i.e. the Federal Republic of Germany and Austria.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, all the combat units were based in southwestern Bohemia, and the border with “friendly” communist states was militarily unprotected, hence, “the thrust of the Czechoslovak military layout was pointing westwards for over twenty years and no intelligence activity, let alone manoeuvre, had ever been undertaken against a potential enemy in the East.”<sup>144</sup>

Furthermore, Czechoslovakia could not expect any tangible support from western democracies. The West was not ready to threaten the fragile strategic balance based on the East - West division of Europe in order to intervene in Czechoslovakia in 1968, because “everybody knew there were ‘hot areas’ on both sides of the East-West divide which the opposite power considered off-limits.”<sup>145</sup> Also, the United States under the Johnson administration was heavily involved in the Vietnam War and busy with solving internal disturbances.<sup>146</sup> For this reasons, the western powers limited their support to formal denials of the intervention.

Considering the overall impact of these circumstances it is right to assess that in contrast with the situation in Munich crisis in 1938, in 1968 there was not even a marginal chance that a military counteraction could have been successful. However, those Czechoslovak generals who were sympathetic to the anti-reform and pro-intervention platform had strong incentives to stage a pro-Soviet military coup. Given the presence of the Soviet-led occupational troops in the country, such a coup would be a relatively ‘risk-free’ venture, which would have solved the problem in a similar fashion like the Jaruzelski’s 1981 military coup in Poland. Obviously, under the situation when the story about invitation and the establishment of a puppet government failed, and the society remained hostile to the occupying forces, the Soviets would welcomed such a “solution,” resulting in their disengagement and allowing to present the crisis as an internal Czechoslovak matter.

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<sup>143</sup> Jaromír Navrátil, ed., *The Prague Spring 1968* (Budapest: Central European University Press, Distributed in the USA by Cornell University Press, 1998), 411.

<sup>144</sup> Kusin, 9-10.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>146</sup> Brisch and Volgyes, 205-6.



In the aftermath of the invasion, the Czechoslovak military leaders got caught up in a peculiar position. According to Condoleezza Rice, the military leadership was caught “between two masters, the domestic liberalization which it did not dare to denounce and the Soviet party fury that it was unable and unwilling to do so.”<sup>147</sup> However, the fact that the generals were surprised by the invasion is a credit to their professionalism and respect to civilian control of the military. The renowned Czechoslovak historian Karel Kaplan, who emigrated from Czechoslovakia after 1968, claims that, “the military leadership was indeed uninformed and acted quite responsibly in the wake of invasion, informing the [Czechoslovak] political leadership of the progress and behavior of the allied troops.”<sup>148</sup> Another argument proving the loyalty of the military leaders is that “the Soviet reports on their reception upon entering Prague spoke only of friendly conversation with one captain and some unnamed soldiers. Either the Soviets were trying not to embarrass the leadership of the ČLA or really failed to obtain their support.”<sup>149</sup>, which is in sharp contrast with the activity of the security forces, therefore Rice is definitely right as she asserts: “whatever ‘internal’ assistance the Soviets received was probably offered by the security forces.”<sup>150</sup> Though, the second dimensional relations were still strong enough to provide the Soviets with additional influence in the Czechoslovak military matters. For example, when he was unable to get instructions from the Czechoslovak political leadership, the Czechoslovak Minister of National Defense, Colonel-General Martin Dzúr, consulted during the initial stage of the invasion all his actions with the top Soviet civilian and military leadership,<sup>151</sup> but even he did not dare to disobey the Czechoslovak political representation.

After the invasion the Czechoslovak military stayed neutral, but in reality it actively participated in the policy of passive resistance, which resulted in a situation

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<sup>147</sup> Rice, “The politics of Client Command,” 250.

<sup>148</sup> Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army*, 157-8.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Navrátil, ed., 412.

when, “during the first months after invasion, the ČLA leadership refused to ‘welcome’ the occupiers. Rather, the months after the invasion were marked by frantic attempts to adjust and to avoid confrontation.”<sup>152</sup>

The KGB Report on the “Counterrevolutionary Underground” in Czechoslovakia from October 13, 1968 criticizes that although the Czechoslovak military stayed officially neutral in the crisis, there were many anti-Soviets incidents from individual units and soldiers.<sup>153</sup> Many commanders openly showed their negative sentiment about the occupation forces by refusing to provide them with support and publicly throwing out Soviet medals and banners. Individual soldiers frequently participated in anti-occupation demonstration. On 23 August 1968 officers from the Central Military Command issued an open letter to the president, stating that:

As Czechoslovak soldiers, we are bitterly outraged that we have to watch how our garrisons are being occupied. Orders that we receive force us to provide assistance to the occupying troops, which is in contrary with the attitude of our nation and our conscience. It bitterly outrages us that some of our party and political leaders are kept in custody. In case they are not immediately released, we expect, Mr. President, your order to protect our leaders by means of the Czechoslovak People’s Army. <sup>154</sup>

The sharpest anti-intervention action happened when a group of generals from the Main Political Directorate under the leadership of Army General Václav Prchlík, made arrangements to start guerrilla struggle against the occupants,<sup>155</sup> but these attempts ended in vain, because the Czechoslovak politicians opposed violent protests. The truth is that General Prchlík represents an isolated figure amongst the Czechoslovak generals, because he was “the only military man in an important position who had suggested military defense as a possible action.”<sup>156</sup> But even Prchlík respected fully the superiority of the civilian leadership and he did not venture to any military action without a political

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<sup>152</sup> Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army*, 160.

<sup>153</sup> Navrátil, ed., 522-24.

<sup>154</sup> Antonín Benčík, Jaromír Navrátil, and Jan Paulík, *Vojenské otázky Československé reformy 1967-1970* (Military Aspects of the Czechoslovak Reform 1967-1970) (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1996), 279.

<sup>155</sup> Navrátil, 523.

<sup>156</sup> Hans Brish and Ivan Volgyes. *Czechoslovakia: The Heritage of Ages Past* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, Distributed by New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 206.

directive. Other generals chose less radical approaches, example of which is the letter of the General Staff Chief, General Karel Rusov, to the Soviet command warning that the occupation of military installations and blocking of the regular work of state institutions “creates a conflict-prone situation and leads to further escalation of already strenuous relations,”<sup>157</sup> which still shows their resentment and hostility towards “allied” occupiers.

The Soviets apparently did not trust the Czechoslovak military enough to inform at least some generals about their plans, which provides evidence about coherence and loyalty of the officer corps, as well as it proves a strong civilian control of the Czechoslovak military. Prior to the invasion the military successfully participated in the process of democratization, which resulted in the Memorandum of Scientific Workers in the Czechoslovak armed forces in May 1968 proclaiming that the Czechoslovak military doctrine had to be “the policy of a sovereign state contributing its own views to the formation of the common positions of the [Warsaw] alliance.”<sup>158</sup> Therefore, “it took the Soviets almost a year to establish prohibitive control of the ČLA.”<sup>159</sup> During the months of occupation, in the military like in the society, “the failure to subdue Czechoslovakia politically for this extended period created a situation in which elements of the liberalization existed side by side with the conservative backlash which the invasion engendered. The era was thus marked by great heterogeneity in the leadership and in the society.”<sup>160</sup> In a similar fashion like in the February crisis in 1948, the military paid dire price for staying loyal to the political leadership during the following period of conservative communist resurgence, because “the gap between the military and the society widened even more after 1968 when the Czechoslovak armed forces were thoroughly purged by the Czechoslovak Communist Party and became even more tightly controlled by the Soviet Military Command. The Czechoslovak army became in fact a political scapegoat.”<sup>161</sup>

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157 Benčík, Navrátil, and Paulík, 279.

158 Hodic, 25.

159 Rice, “The politics of Client Command,” 257.

160 Ibid., 262-63.

161 Bebler, ed., 94.

It took the Soviets almost two more years to fully subjugate the Czechoslovak society and its military to their hard-line Marxist ideology, by using step-by-step interventional approach “divide and rule.” Given the historic and political settings in 1968, the movement of passive resistance and civic disobedience was probably the best answer to the invasion as any military action would have certainly resulted in a widespread bloodshed. While Soviets could not possibly lose militarily they definitely lost politically. A positive side-effect of the intervention was that it successfully eliminated pan-Slavonic friendly sentiment toward Russians within the Czechoslovak society. As Paul observed in 1981, “Colonial nations generally do not love their masters, and it is safe to say that most Czech and Slovaks today greatly resent Russians.”<sup>162</sup> This resentment was important for the future democratization movement, which started in mid 1970s and culminated in the bloodless breakdown of the Communist regime in 1989. Unfortunately, this achievement was not priceless. In the popular resistance, about 70 people died, and approximately 1000 were wounded in different incidents that occurred, as people massively participated in protest actions against the occupants.<sup>163</sup>

In sum, “the occupation of Czechoslovakia by its allies was ironic and unique, even in the context of a long history of foreign occupations; enemies had invaded the Czech and Slovak lands many times before, but never friends.”<sup>164</sup> Against the scenario, the Soviet leaders were not able to put across the message that the intervention was requested by Czechoslovakia. Under given historical circumstances, the fact that the Soviets failed to reach their goals in 1968 proves that strong professional traditions and professional respect to civilian authorities were still present in Czechoslovak military, even after twenty years of the totalitarian purges.

#### D BREAKDOWN OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN 1989

The so-called “Velvet” Revolution in 1989 stands for another pivotal moment of Czechoslovak history, when the Czechoslovak military fully cooperated with the

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<sup>162</sup> Paul, 57.

<sup>163</sup> Harry Schwartz, *Prague's 200 Days: The struggle for Democracy in Czechoslovakia* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1969), 215.

<sup>164</sup> Paul, 54.

requirements of their civilian leaders; therefore, once again this crisis provides strong evidence of stable civil-military relations. By overthrowing the Communist regime in peaceful demonstrations and strikes, the Czechoslovaks “have succeeded in changing the country from communism to a free society with a market economy – no more, no less.”<sup>165</sup> Hence after the elections in 1990 Czechoslovakia could have its first completely non-communist government in over forty years.

The 1989 political crisis shares some common features with the similar 1968 events, as in both cases there was a deep internal political crisis stemming from the attempts to reform (in 1968) or to overthrow (in 1989) the ruling communist party. However, the Soviet influence on the Czechoslovak internal matters was less important than in 1968, because after the arrival of Michail Gorbachev’s reforms in 1987,<sup>166</sup> the Soviet leaders were reluctant to intervene in these fields; hence, the Soviet influence in the crisis was marginal. In other words, in contrast with the 1968 crisis, the second dimensional party-military relations were significantly weaker in 1989, because for the Soviet Union “the traditional military solution, with a preceding coercive diplomacy, was out of question.”<sup>167</sup> However, because “the gap between the military and the society widened even more after 1968 when the Czechoslovak armed forces were thoroughly purged by the Czechoslovak Communist Party,”<sup>168</sup> the intra-state, first dimensional, relations were stronger in 1989 than in 1968, hence these relations played crucial role in the escalation of the serious political crisis, resulting in dramatic deterioration of civil-military relations.

During the initial stage of the “Velvet” revolution in 1989, which started as a spontaneous protest movement in response to brutal crackdown of the communist riot police on the first anti-regime demonstrations, “there was then a wide-spread fear that the army might be misused to suppress the liberal revolution. Although such tendencies were in fact present in the Supreme Command, the armed forces remained politically neutral

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<sup>165</sup> Václav Klaus, *Renaissance: The Rebirth of Liberty in the Heart of Europe* (Washington D.C.: The CATO Institute, 2001), 3.

<sup>166</sup> Wikipedia Encyclopedia, January 2001 Engl. ed., s.v. “Perestroika,” available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perestroika>, accessed on 2 November 2004.

<sup>167</sup> Suk, 52.

<sup>168</sup> Bebler, ed., 94.

and eventually did not intervene.”<sup>169</sup> In fact, these concerns must have been legitimate, because “in communist-dominated Czechoslovakia the military was directed to fulfill two equally important functions: to defend the state against an external enemy and to protect the internal political status quo.”<sup>170</sup>

At first, the communist leaders were considering to use the Party’s paramilitary units, the People’s Militia,<sup>171</sup> to suppress the mass demonstrations. This plan failed because the militia generally ignored the Communist Party’s orders for mobilization and eventual intervention against the demonstrators.<sup>172</sup> Hence, “the failure to mobilize the People’s Militia shifted the attention of the [Communist] Central Committee to the army as a possible means of preserving the party’s power.”<sup>173</sup> The armed forces were systematically being prepared for this kind of mission. In late 1989, i.e. right before to the revolution, there was there was a rehearsal for a military crackdown on civic disturbances; which was known under an action code-name “Intervention.” In the frame of this operation, “over 13,000 trained conscripts led by 79 officers and 155 tanks, had been prepared to deal with the demonstrations expected for the anniversary of the [1968] Soviet invasion in August [1989].”<sup>174</sup> This provides evidence of the tight Party control of the military. Following the Party orders, “the Czechoslovak General Staff of the Czechoslovak People’s Army completed on 23 November 1989 preparations for military crackdown on opposition centers and demonstrating citizens,”<sup>175</sup> so the military was ready to step into the political conflict.

In the end, “the leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist Party decided the following day to refrain from the use of military power and resolve the situation by ‘political means.’”<sup>176</sup> The most probable explanation for this decision seems to be the

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169 Bebler, ed., 94.

170 Ibid., 95.

171 See chapter IIIB to find out about the origins and the role of the People’s Militia in the 1948 communist takeover.

172 Bernard Wheaton and Zdeňek Kavan, *The Velvet Revolution: Czechoslovakia, 1988-1991* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 70.

173 Ibid., 71.

174 Ibid.

175 Suk, 484.

176 Ibid.

fact that “the regime had so decayed that it was unable to rely on even on the central security organs that had kept it in power for so long,”<sup>177</sup> as it was consequently indicated by the further course of the revolution. Either way, “the military option was narrowly defeated in the Central [Communist] Committee,”<sup>178</sup> so the military was supposed to stay in barracks.

This development of the crisis was particularly unfavorable for the Czechoslovak generals. The Communist Party learned its lesson from the 1948 and 1968, when many general officers turned out to be hostile to communist ideology and after severe purges most of the generals in 1989 were communist hardliners. For these discredited officials, personified by the Minister of Defense Milan Václavík, it was of paramount importance that the Communist Party would remain in power, because otherwise their careers would be certainly endangered by any kind of democratization.

Apart from having sufficient incentives to intervene into politics, the Czechoslovak generals also had enough power to stage a coup. Although the communist leaders voluntarily succumbed to a peaceful solution, “the final pillar of Communist power, the army, was ... prepared to intervene for a time.”<sup>179</sup> Also, “one reason [to stage an anti-democratization coup] relates to the basic fear among the officer corps that the new civilian state officials would immediately launch a widespread purge of the military as punishment for the army’s role in upholding the previous regime (as happened in Argentina in 1983-1984).”<sup>180</sup> The fact that “such fears must have been on the minds of many officers”<sup>181</sup> created favorable conditions for a military coup, as the coup-staging generals would have easily found a support within their subordinated military units.

The military leadership also knew that their window of opportunity to a military coup was rapidly closing, because shortly after November 17, 1989 the movement of popular resistance against the communist regime, led by the Civic Forum (CF)

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<sup>177</sup> Wheaton and Kavan, 114.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>180</sup> Thomas S. Szayna, *The Military in a Postcommunist Czechoslovakia* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 1992), 23.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

movement, started spreading among the Czechoslovak servicemen. This process resulted in a situation when “branches of Military Forum, modeled on CF ... supported one of the students’ demands calling for a reduction in the length of military service. The consequences of this implied threat to discipline disconcerted the minister of defense, Milan Václavík, who proposed a military solution at the CPC plenum on Friday, November 24.”<sup>182</sup> These developments were going on under conditions when “doubtless, armed force was seriously contemplated in the first week [after November 17, 1989], partly as a last refuge of the desperate members of the [Communist] Central Committee,”<sup>183</sup> so in case of a military coup d’état, the generals could count on the support of the highest ranking Party cadres. In addition, “the most substantial reason and one that might led the officer corps to unite in favor of intervention relates to the military’s institutional role as the final guarantor of the security of the state. In this sense, open talk from the Civic Forum about a rapid Czechoslovak withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact would have seemed irresponsible to the Czechoslovak military.”<sup>184</sup> For all these reasons, the Czechoslovak military leaders undoubtedly had a very strong motivation to seize the political power and, by the same token, they understood they had very little time to make the decision.

The final output of the efforts to use a military coup to reverse the political progress was a series of diffident attempts to deploy military units into the streets. For example, “conscript infantrymen in two regiments, kept on standby in Plzeň and Pardubice [within the operational range from the capitol], were denied access to television and newspapers, received no visits, and were confined to barracks.”<sup>185</sup> Obviously, this “attempt to insulate these soldiers from the outside world betrayed the high command’s fear that they might have developed a sense of common cause with [revolutionary] students,”<sup>186</sup> had only one purpose – to keep them ready for the intervention. Wheaton and Kavan refer in their writing to columns of tanks in the vicinity of the capital Prague and troops that were bused to the capital from the country “with

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<sup>182</sup> Wheaton and Kavan, 71.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>184</sup> Szayna, 23.

<sup>185</sup> Wheaton and Kavan, 71.



orders to attack and clear the [revolutionary] student occupied facilities on the night of November 21 to 22 [1989].”<sup>187</sup> All these, clearly desperate, attempts were poorly prepared and ill conceived. In the end, the troops “spent the night in their buses in subfreezing temperatures and were grateful for the constant supplies of soup and hot drinks delivered by [revolutionary] students. Other units had appeared at factory gates in the suburbs but had been given no further orders.”<sup>188</sup> Apparently, the Czechoslovak highest ranking military officers had no courage to assume responsibility and take over the political power. The most obvious explanation for this fact seems to be that even if they were subjects of a massive ideological indoctrination, the military leaders did not go against the principles of the professional military ethics. Thus, without the guidance from the leadership, the preparations for a possible military intervention internally collapsed.

Consequently, after the victory of democracy was secured, the Czechoslovak military leaders tried to interpret the preparations for a military intervention as regular training activities. Nevertheless, they failed and shortly afterwards all Czechoslovak general officers, who were compromised by their participation in these preparations, were promptly dismissed or resigned voluntarily, including the Minister of Defense. However, the situation was different at lower levels of the chain of command. As late as on 22 January 1990, there was reported “a widespread disillusionment in many military installations, coming from the feeling that ‘the OF [Civic Forum] does not protect the interests of enlisted soldiers and that ‘political commissars’ were not fired but only transferred to other jobs.”<sup>189</sup> Nevertheless, the democratization of military as an institution was irreversibly on the right path.

The most plausible explanation why the Czechoslovak military backed down from its planned intervention into politics seems to be a strong civilian control of the Czechoslovak military in 1989. It is necessary to keep in mind that prior to 1989 “all important decisions related to defense and the military were made by the professional apparatus of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.... In spite of the importance attributed

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<sup>186</sup> Wheaton and Kavan, 71.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>189</sup> Suk, 299.

to the armed forces by the Communist Party the professional military could only very modestly influence key decisions on defense issues.”<sup>190</sup> The truth is it was quite common in these times that flag officers were members of the highest communist decision-making bodies; in fact, the Party membership was a necessary prerequisite of becoming a general officer and the Communist Party apparatus incorporated all high military commanders. However, their position was not strong enough; hence “the top brass’s influence on civilian state leadership had been also negligible.”<sup>191</sup> In other words, the first dimensional Party-military ties were efficiently substituting for what was supposed to be a democratic civilian control of the military.

However, the danger of a military coup should not be underestimated. Apparently, the communist leadership learned the lesson from its unsuccessful attempts to control military in 1948 and the passive resistance of the Czechoslovak military to Communist hardliners in 1968. Ideological indoctrination of the officer corps was enormous in the decade before 1989, so the military was fully under the influence of the Communist ideology. On the other hand, “it is notable that communist party membership proved not to be the factor determining the allegiance of the officer corps. The fact that 82 percent of professional soldiers were party members did not prevent the army from acquiescing in the transition and, indeed, securing it.”<sup>192</sup> Apparently, the Czechoslovak officer corps adopted the communist ideology only formally; in fact majority of the officers remained allegiant to their professional ethos. The continued primary allegiance of military officers-citizens to the state was first recognized by Valtr Komarek, a deputy premier in the first non-communist government, who proclaimed that “the politicization of the army must not be underestimated, but basically they [military officers] are *citizens* who were put in uniforms and have children and families. Many young people who demonstrated in the days of November [1989] were sons and daughters of officers.”<sup>193</sup>

Most probably, a military coup could have succeeded, although it is questionable whether such a military intervention could reverse the overall societal advancement.

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<sup>190</sup> Bebler, ed., 95.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Szayna, 25.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

Apparently, the leaders of the new democratic opposition were quite aware of this fact. The CF leader, Václav Havel, who later became the first non-communist president after forty years of the totalitarian regime, “subsequently [in October 1990] expressed his and nation’s gratitude to General Miroslav Vacek, the outgoing chief of staff [and Václavík’s successor], for not resorting to force during the crisis,”<sup>194</sup> which would have clearly escalated the crisis into new dimensions. This leads to a general conclusion that “in any event, the [new] army leadership, represented by Mr. Vacek, demonstrated a good measure of an internalized professional military service ethic....In December 1989 some of the ‘politicized’ officers tried to stir up the military against the new government, but Vacek claimed to have put an immediate end to such actions.”<sup>195</sup> Hence, the political process was reflected in the military as an internal struggle between coup-prone communist hardliners and real military professionals. Luckily for Czechoslovakia, the latter group prevailed.

After considering all aspects of the 1989 crisis the most accurate conclusion seems to be that there was probability of a military coup d’état, as the Czechoslovak generals had personal stakes in preservation of the ruling communist regime. They also possessed sufficient powers to stage a coup. The fact that the Czechoslovak military, which was seriously ideologically indoctrinated, withdrew from the original preparations for military intervention without any significant incident and let the political players to settle the crisis, even if for the most of then highest ranking officers this meant the end of their military careers, gives another piece of evidence of a traditionally strong civilian control of the Czechoslovak (Czech) military.

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<sup>194</sup> Wheaton and Kavan, 72.

<sup>195</sup> Szayna, 24.

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## IV. CONCLUSION

After analyzing in detail the civil-military relation in the most serious crises of the Czechoslovak history, the most appropriate conclusion is that even in these most critical moments the Czechoslovak military demonstrated exceptional loyalty to its political leadership, even if it was sometimes at the expense of the prestige of military as a trusted institution within the society. A few isolated civil-military incidents should be understood as desperate attempts of individual patriotic officers to save the nation, without considering wider context of their actions. None of these incidents ever developed into a serious breach of harmonious civil-military relations. Hence, in accordance with the Huntington's theory of ideal civil-military relations, the study presented in this thesis apparently confirms that a strong military professionalism, typified by the bonds of traditions, obedience, and patriotic loyalty, plays crucial role in determining the final state of civil-military relations, that is an objective civilian control of the military.

Although the Huntington's model has been recently challenged, among others, by an alternative agency theory presented by Peter D. Feaver, it still appears to be the most suitable theoretical model for the Czechoslovak case. Agency theory may be relevant for the interpretation of the latest developments in the U.S. civil-military relations, as this theory "treats civil-military relations as a special case of the more general phenomenon of political principals [i.e. political leaders] seeking to monitor and influence the behavior of their political agents [i.e. military]."<sup>196</sup> Feaver uses this approach to explain the alleged ideological gap between the U.S. society and its military. However, in the history of the Czechoslovak and Czech civil-military relations, there has never been any ideological gap between a conservative military and a liberal society. This fact may be explained by a different ideological character of the Czechoslovak (Czech) military culture. The Czechoslovak (Czech) traditions, which started with the establishment of the Czechoslovak legions in World War I, has always been based on civic principles, as described in Chapter II. Therefore, the Czechoslovak (Czech) military professionalism has been increasingly based on a professional culture of civil servants and as such it

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<sup>196</sup> Feaver, 284.

seems to be more important than the relationship principal-agent. Apart from that the Czechoslovak and Czech society has traditionally been ideologically stable; if there were ideological changes, like the 40-year communist experiment, then the majority of the society, including the military, accepted the change. The most suitable explanation for this fact may be found in the words of the current Czech president, Václav Klaus. His comments on the ideological background of the Velvet revolution in 1989 can be generalized to the overall characteristics of the Czechoslovak (Czech) approach to ideological issues:

Our approach was undoubtedly influenced by the traditional Czech pragmatism and realism: by our strong democratic, nonaristocratic, almost plebeian traditions; by our evident lack of heroism; by our disbelief in authority, strong words, and formal gestures; and finally by uncertainty about our national identity, which had been lost, taken, or questioned so many times in the past.<sup>197</sup>

This thesis purposely omits less-important incidents in the Czechoslovak civil-military relations, i.e. so-called “Šejna’s affair” of 1967, the alleged coup preparations of 1926, and the so-called Židenice incidents, which happened on the night of 21-22 January 1933. Maj. Gen. Šejna, upon immigrating to the USA in 1968 where he could express himself freely, denied that “a coup was planned and such a plan has never been conclusively proven.”<sup>198</sup> The other two incidents are connected to the controversial personality of Radola Gajda, a former Czechoslovak General and the leader of the Czech fascists. Radola Gajda was often characterized by his contemporaries as an ambitious adventurer, who “may have been effective as a front line soldier, but he lacked the temperament and intellect to be an effective politician.”<sup>199</sup> This seems to be explaining why both fascist coup attempts were poorly prepared and ended up in farce-style clashes, which could not seriously threaten the political status-quo. Overall, “the Czech fascists were simply never unified enough nor possessed enough popular support to pose a serious threat to the government.”<sup>200</sup> Besides, the Czechoslovak military turned out to be resilient to fascist infiltration, which provides additional evidence of the strong military

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<sup>197</sup> Klaus, 111.

<sup>198</sup> Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army*, 112.

<sup>199</sup> Kelly, 68.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, 72.

professionalism. This way, the Czechoslovak civil-military relations resembled the situation in neighboring Germany right after Hitler seized political power in 1933, when the Reichswehr's professional officers "had serious reservations about Nazis' rowdy, anarchistic behavior, their undisguised contempt for the law, the terrorism of the SA and last but not least, the personage of the Führer himself,"<sup>201</sup> so it took a couple of years until the German military fully succumbed to the Nazi rule. Fortunately for the Czechoslovak civil-military relations, the fascist movement in Czechoslovakia was not able to copy the Nazi scheme and get into power by political means.

As it was said in the introduction, this thesis intentionally does not examine the impact of the Czechoslovak military professionalism on the Slovak civil-military relations. Owing to the fact that "in the aftermath of the [1993] divorce, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have reached different conclusions regarding regional security,"<sup>202</sup> in addition to the challenging need "to accommodate the specific interests of ethnic minorities to Slovak national interests, and to incorporate them into Slovak state interests,"<sup>203</sup> the Slovak case seems to be significantly more convoluted; hence, to evaluate the importance of Czechoslovak civil-military traditions would require a comprehensive analysis which goes beyond the scope of this thesis. However, this area seems to be offering the most obvious opportunity for future research, especially after both nations has converged in NATO and the EU. As a matter of fact, it could be also useful to make similar studies for other central European nations, which should consequently enable to accomplish a more general comparative analysis of the whole region, because all militaries in the region "have already undergone comprehensive reforms....the depoliticization of the armed forces did not encounter any major problems in these states."<sup>204</sup> Such a research should be desirable in order to explore common patterns in the relationship between military professionalism and civil-military relations.

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201 Joachim Fest, *Plotting Hitler's Death: The Story of the German Resistance* (New York: Henry Holt and comp. LCC, 1994), 37.

202 Simon, 6.

203 Ibid., 7.

204 Zoltan Barany and Ivan Volgyes ed., *The legacies of Communism in Eastern Europe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 109-10.

In turn, this scheme would as well provide a good opportunity to validate the Huntington's theory of civil-military relations in a broader context.



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